

## OPTIMIST OR PESSIMIST?

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It was with the most intense interest that we opened and read the Twentieth Century number of the EVANGELIST. And we were not at all surprised at the diverse views taken there, for in this world there will ever be prophets, both false and true,—the false prophesying from the mount of human vision—the true standing on the mountain of God's Word, lifted above the material and with the eye of faith, seeing "the things which shall be hereafter." The true prophet summons all to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," believes that "the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," and holds the Word to be a prophet more sure than any ocular demonstration, whatsoever.

Our esteemed brother, "Quiet Observer," declares that "Considering the marvellous *material* (italics mine) development of the nineteenth century, one is made optimistic. But far exceeding this is the *moral* betterment of the world." Both of which we admit, but does our brother forget that above the material and above the moral, as the heaven is above the earth, stands the *spiritual*? Tho the fruit upon the tree be choice, yet, if the root withereth, how long shall that fruit be? *The most ominous portent of today is the very fact that we are prone to exalt the material and the moral above the spiritual. The world is drunk with the material!* Whether is best, material Babylon and moral Capernaum, or spiritual Jerusalem?

Beyond every doubt there has been great progress in the world along material lines. But, I do not know that life was intolerable before the day of matches, electric lights, phonographs, breech-loading shot guns, trolleys, and Pullman sleepers. I do not know that hearts were not as light and gay, as happy and contented, when they went to church in the old lumber wagon as they are today in the rubber-tired surrey, or since the automobile is known to fame. Perhaps, after all, our forefathers enjoyed life quite as much as we. Maybe they were contented and happy! Maybe the birds sang then! Maybe some flowers bloomed! Perhaps Ruskin told the truth: "The great mechanical impulses of the age, of which most of us are so proud, are a mere passing fever, half speculative, half childish. People will discover, at last, that the royal roads to anything, can no more be laid in iron than they can in dust." Perhaps a greater than Ruskin spoke truly, saying, "The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment." I do not know that my heart "is beating more tenderly," or that its "moral sentiment is purer and stronger" than that of my ancestors. Perhaps, after all, my fathers were acquainted with Virtue, and my mothers loved with a love as intense as I. Who dares to measure the love throbbing in the heart of the Hindoo mother, even as she casts her babe into the jaws of the crocodile of the sacred Ganges? Or, who shall say

that any Christian mother loved with a greater love than she whose heart bursted and poured its bitterness down over her soul as she yielded in obedience her dearest treasure to the only God she knew? Is it that we have more love or more light?

As to whether life will grow purer, richer, sweeter, as to whether we are to come nearer the ideal, the just, the beautiful, the pure, the true, will depend entirely on the development of the spiritual. And we candidly question as to whether the material can much advance the spiritual. For while the locomotive and the printing-press are mighty weapons in the hands of God's people, forget not that the devil is using the same with terrible force. Would the invention of gun powder have made Darius stronger than Alexander? No, no! Not so long as Alexander had access to the same arsenal as Darius. Depend on it, all reforms, all amelioration of humanity's ills, are dependent on the regeneration of the hearts of men thru the Holy Ghost of God. "Ye must be born again," declared the greatest Philosopher of all time. The Millennium will be brought by the incarnation of God into the hearts of men, and his visible presence among them, and not by the incarnation of electricity into a steel wire, or of physics into brains of men. God pity the man who is looking for the golden age to come sweeping o'er the earth thru wire or over rail, or to proceed forth from the ministration of the black-capped theologians or plug-hatted politicians of the land. Then we would be a pessimist, indeed! Then would we seek the juniper tree, crawl beneath, and cry: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."

The true prophet of God is the man who sees danger as well as blessing in temporal prosperity, and warns us not to forget God in it all. Remember Babylon! He would keep us from becoming drunk with success and power. Amidst it all he prays:

"O God of hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget! Lest we forget."

Call him pessimistic if you will, but such was Noah, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John Baptist, and the Christ of God—the greatest pessimists and the greatest optimists the world ever saw. As prophets of a day they were pessimists; as prophets of the eternal years of God they were optimists. The Christ declared, contradictory tho it may seem, that the last days should be days of the greatest missionary zeal, and likewise of most abounding iniquity. (Matt. 24: 12, 14) In this he was pessimist and optimist. These ancient men of God were men who looked upon material things as "stubble," upon time as uncertain, and upon life itself as a "vapour." "Go to, now, ye who prophesy, having no vision but that of the material eye, go to! Ye know not what shall be upon the morrow. Come up hither, to the words of this prophecy, and God shall shew thee the things which must shortly come to pass."

It is not to be denied that the gospel is being preached more abundantly than ever before; that there is an increasing hunger and a deepening of the spiritual life on the part of many of God's children; that the influence of Christ is felt in the uttermost parts of earth; that even by many of his enemies his name is acknowledged to be "above every name;" that more men and women are ready to lay down their lives for Jesus' sake today, than at any preceding age. But, neither is it to be denied that the devil has his trenches deeper, his breast-works higher than ever before; that the man of "blood and iron" is exalted above the man of "Christ and peace;" that nations are lusting for power, individuals for wealth; that the church is a "treacherous wife;" that after nearly 1900 years of preaching, only one out of every forty living souls are Protestant communicants; that it is quite probable that "not more than one in four of these has experienced regeneration;" that "heathenism is growing more rapidly by natural birth than the church by the new birth."

No, no! The world is not all heaven, neither is it all hell. But truth is truth. The battle is on, and the battle is sore. The hosts of light are in a mighty and almost discouraging conflict with the hosts of darkness. Each day the clash of arms grows sharper and fiercer. The many are in array against the few. But be brave, my heart, and

"Lead on

To victory and renown! Defeat and loss  
Are never possible to Thee. Thy trust  
Is in Omnipotence. What conflicts fierce  
What combats with beleagured devil—powers,  
What sieges of intrenched and ancient wrongs  
Await Thee! But thy faith is high, thy heart  
Is stout, thy sword is good and true.

The light

Shall overcome the darkness, and the sun  
Of a Millennial Day shall surely rise.  
Thy glory beckons. Yes, at last, at last  
Humanity shall win—shall slay the beast,  
Shall crown the Christ, and stand upon the  
heights  
Of life exultant over every foe!"

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## THE EVIL BEGINNING

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The Bible warns youth against the peril of evil beginnings. It bids young people to shun wicked starting-points. Bad habits are formed by little participations in wrong doing. It is the yielding to temptations which at first make apparently slight demands, that leads one into confirmed habits of badness. Rev. Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman, formerly an evangelist, says: "There came one day into my church a man who was a prison evangelist for two cities. He had served a term in prison himself, and then had come thither a Christian man to devote his energy to helping others. When he had finished his address I asked him if he would not tell my young people how he began to go wrong, and he said: "When I was just a boy, in a merchantile establishment in London, I was